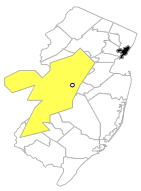
GRAND STREET MERCURY

NEW JERSEY

EPA ID# NJ0001327733



EPA REGION 2
CONGRESSIONAL DIST. 13
Hudson County
City of Hoboken

Site Description

The Grand Street Mercury site is located at 720 - 732 Grand Street, Hoboken, New Jersey. The site is comprised of two buildings and an asphalt-covered parking area. A 5-story former industrial building which was converted into 16 residential/studio spaces from 1993 to 1995. 15 of the 16 conversions were completed prior to identification of sitewide mercury contamination. A 4-story adjoining townhouse was slated for residential conversion as well, but was never converted. The 5-story building is approximately 100 feet by 150 feet and is constructed of brick masonry with interior wooden structural and flooring components. The surrounding area is a mix of residential and commercial/industrial properties. Hoboken High School is located across the street to the northeast. More than 40,000 residents live within a 1-mile radius of the site. In January 1996, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) issued a Public Health Advisory (PHA) that proclaimed "an imminent public health hazard is posed to residents" in the building, and recommended that the residents be dissociated from mercury exposure in the building.

The site was contaminated as a result of over 50 years of production of mercury vapor lamps and mercury connector switches. Free flowing liquid elemental mercury has been observed between flooring layers throughout the former industrial building. Mercury vapors have been detected throughout both buildings above health based concentrations. Mercury has also been observed to have adsorbed to and contaminated sediments and porous wood, brick, and tar surfaces throughout the former industrial building. Sampling results determined that 20 residents, five of which were children, possessed levels of mercury in their urine that might cause subtle neurological changes and renal tubule (kidney) effects. A site study determined that mercury was widespread and building remediation for residential use to be contraindicated. EPA has provided relocation (temporary then permanent) to affected residents. All residents vacated the building by January 11, 1996.

Site Responsibility: The site is being addressed through Federal and potentially responsible party actions.

NPL LISTING HISTORY
Proposed Date: 12/23/96
Final Date: 9/25/97

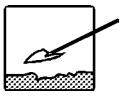
Threats and Contaminants

The buildings are contaminated with elevated concentrations of metallic mercury and mercury vapors. Soils are contaminated with mercury above residential health-based levels. Inhalation of or direct contact with mercury at the site poses a threat to human health.

Cleanup Approach

The site is being addressed in two phases: initial actions to protect human health and a long-term remedial phase focusing on cleanup of the entire site.

Response Action Status



Initial Actions: A Removal Action was conducted to temporarily relocate the affected residents from the metallic mercury and mercury vapors, investigate the extent of mercury contamination at the site, provide 24-hour security, maintain the buildings to prevent exposure to the elements, and prevent further off-site migration of mercury. Two potentially responsible parties (PRPs) are conducting building security and maintenance activities under a Unilateral Administrative Order (UAO) issued to them by EPA. One PRP is also responsible for demolishing the building (see below) pursuant to a separate UAO.

Entire Site: EPA conducted investigations to determine the nature and extent of site contamination at the site. EPA conducted a Baseline Human Health Risk Assessment in April 1997 which identified significant mercury vapor inhalation exposure risk to both children and adults residing at the Site, as well as to potential future workers at the Site. The Risk Assessment also identified potential risk for adverse health effects to children in the event they are exposed to contaminated Site soil. Various cleanup alternatives were developed and analyzed in a July 1997 Focussed Feasibility Study. In July 1997, EPA issued a Proposed Plan outlining its preferred alternative for the site. On July 16, 1997, EPA held a public meeting and invited public participation and comment on its preferred alternative. In September 1997, EPA issued a Record of Decision for the site which included: permanent relocation of residents from the site; demolition of the two contaminated buildings; sampling, excavation, and off-site disposal of contaminated soil at EPA-approved facilities, and; groundwater and off-site soil monitoring to assess potential impacts to groundwater attributable to the site.

Cleanup Progress

(Actual Construction Underway)

Dissociating affected residents from the site and implementing measures to prevent further off-site mercury migration have mitigated the risks to residents and minimized the risks to neighbors of the site.

The former residents of the Site have been permanently relocated under an Interagency Agreement (IAG) with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE). To date, all property interests at the Site have been acquired by the government, and all moves have been completed. In total, fifteen families and twenty-two businesses

have been successfully relocated.

The townhouse and former industrial building at the Site stand vacant, and are being maintained and secured by the PRPs. Two containers of waste material, one of which was determined to be RCRA hazardous waste, were removed from the Site in January 1998 and disposed of off-site. The Remedial Design for demolition work has been approved by EPA, and the PRP began building demolition activities in March 2002, under EPA oversight. Demolition is expected to be complete by Autumn 2003. Additional off-site soil samples were collected in the Summer 2001, the results of which will be ready by May 2002. EPA will determine whether off-site soil remediation activities are necessary once the sampling results are submitted.

Site Repository

Hoboken Public Library
500 Park Avenue
Hoboken, New Jersey 07030